

HERMISTON

# Lack of staff hits local DMV offices

ERICK PETERSON  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Eastern Oregon residents were frustrated and disappointed Thursday, April 28, when they found the Hermiston DMV office was closed.

Sarah Krebs of Ione was there to update her driver's license.

"I came a long ways to come here, and now it's not even open," she said.

Her birthday is May 1, the expiration date of her license.

The Pendleton DMV was open, according to the DMV website, and Krebs said she would try it, as she got back into her vehicle and left.

The posted hours on the front door of the Hermiston office are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Still, the doors were locked at 2:30 p.m. April 28.

"This office is closed due to staffing," according to a sign on the door.

The sign also guided people to the Oregon Driver & Motor Vehicle Services website, oregondmv.com, for more information, and it notified visitors to check their email for more information if they had



The Hermiston DMV office, 810 S. Highway 395, is not open Thursday, April 28, 2022, during normal business hours, due to lack of staff.

scheduled appointments.

The DMV website stated the Heppner office also was closed April 28. There was no further mention about when they would reopen.

Another disappointed person, Dominick Giefing, had been waiting in front of the Hermiston DMV at 810 S. Highway 395. He said he had been at the office the day prior but was not able to get his driver's license because he had forgotten his eyeglasses.

"This is the biggest inconvenience ever," he said. "They

should be open. DMVs don't help people. They just make their lives harder."

His mother, Mina Edwards, was sitting with him in her vehicle out in front of the office. They are both from Ione.

She said they have been through a lot of bureaucracy on the road to get Giefing's license. She had tried the DMV's customer service phone number, but had not received help after half an hour of being kept on hold.

"It's been an unfortunate

nightmare whirlwind," she said.

## Problem remains after reopening

Hermiston DMV reopened April 30. The Heppner office, though, does not operate on Fridays. DMV spokesperson David House said the agency is receiving a fraction of the job applications it had in previous years and called the staffing critical.

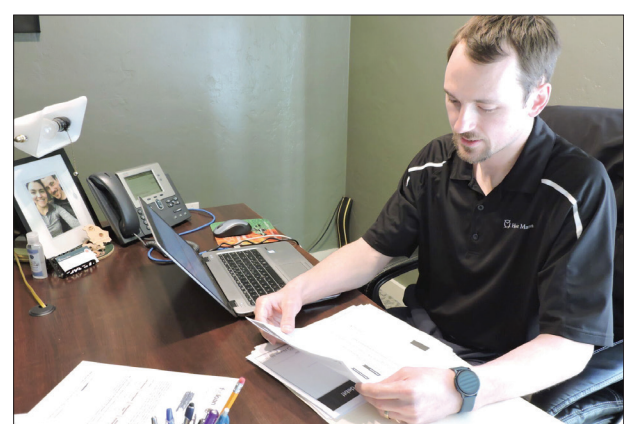
"We're suffering across the state," House said.

People are retiring or leaving for other jobs, and not enough new applicants are stepping in to fill open positions, he said. The Medford office is at half its regular staff, and offices like the Hermiston office, which he said operates with two or three workers, can shut down when a single person gets sick and has to stay home.

There are 60 offices statewide, and many of them are staffed by two or three employees, including the Hermiston office, he said.

He added that all of the Oregon Department of Transportation is facing this problem, not just the DMV.

House recommended that people in need of services visit the DMV website to see if they can be helped that way.



Matthew Cecil looks over paperwork April 22, 2022, in his office at Horace Mann Insurance in Hermiston. The paperwork documents his efforts in helping people manage their student loan debts.

# Local insurer helps with student debt

ERICK PETERSON  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Matthew Cecil said he is helping free people from student loan debt.

He is a licensed insurance producer with Horace Mann Insurance Company, 662 E. Main St., Hermiston.

"We work primarily with educators," he said. "We have a service called 'Student Loan Solutions.' What it provides is a way for the educators to obtain student loan forgiveness through federal programs that are available."

He said he will sit down with a client for an assessment, going over the size of the debt, the types of loans and determine eligibility for forgiveness. Then, he will assist with paperwork.

If he is not able to get the loan totally forgiven, he said he can often get a portion forgiven or payments reduced.

That consultation is free, he said, and he can help other public service employees, too. If a person works for a governmental employer or a 501(c)3 tax-exempt employer, they can qualify. Other employees of not-for-profit organizations also may be helped, he said.

He listed emergency management, military, public safety, law enforcement, public legal services, disability services, services for the elderly, public health, library services and other school-based services as professions covered by loan-forgiveness programs.

"I currently have 249 active clients from the Northwest," Cecil said.

He added he has 506 records, including people who have expressed interest in the program and around 52 who were declined because of ineligibility. He has helped 50 people to date, he said.

And those 50 have had a total of nearly \$1.4 million forgiven.

He called student loan "a burden" for many people, and he is thankful he was able to pay for his own schooling without such an albatross.

"Unfortunately, with the

structure of their careers, (educators and other public servants) have to pursue higher education and get that degree to be certified, so it's required for them," he said. "A lot of them go back for their masters, but then they're saddled with student loan debt."

Increasing interest, forbearance, life problems and more can complicate a person's situation and make the end of debt seem impossible.

"I've heard all kinds of stories, whether it's a small amount or hundreds of thousands of dollars, and (borrowers) are not going to be able to pay (the loans) on their own," he said.

Cecil spoke of a few stories from people he has helped. He shared the written testimonial of one Umatilla educator who said he had \$110,000 before Cecil could help him. This educator, according to the testimonial, started an income-based repayment plan with lower payments. He also got \$65,000 worth of student loan debt forgiven.

"I still have \$40,000 that I still need to pay on, and some of those payments have been counted toward forgiveness. Thirty-nine more payments and I'll be done," he said, according to the testimonial.

A second written testimonial told of how another educator, from Walla Walla, was able to reduce his loan by more than \$10,000. He, too, expressed gratitude to Cecil for his work.

Cecil stated this sort of help, assisting people at no cost to them, makes sense from a business standpoint. By helping people with their student loans, he is attracting potential customers. Also, he is better serving his existing customers.

His agency sells auto, home, life and other forms of insurance.

In addition to being good for his company's bottom line, helping people cancel their student debt is personally satisfying, Cecil said.

"The looks on people's faces are worth it alone," he said. "Helping people is something I really like to do."

# Stanfield city manager strikes out on Warrenton job

By ETHAN MYERS  
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Stanfield City Manager Ben Burgener is not going to be the next city manager of Warrenton.

The Warrenton City Commission unanimously approved offering the position to Burgener, but now the Oregon coastal town's search continues for its next city manager after contract negotiations with the only finalist failed.



Burgener

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer, who was tasked with handling negotiations, announced at a city commission meeting Tuesday night, April 26, that several offers were made between the parties, but Burgener's final offer exceeded the city's budget.

Commissioners chose to move on and terminate negotiations.

"The city manager is a critical piece to the city's leadership, there's no doubt about it. But we also need to make sure that we're not cutting services to just get the CEO in the C suite," Balensifer said. "I don't have any ill will or any issues with Mr. Burgener. I'm disappointed that we've reached this point but it is a tight job market, and housing is expensive and we are at where we're at."

The city made two offers to Burgener, with the second offer being final. Burgener made three counteroffers, according to the city, all higher than the city's budget and raising his asking amounts each time.

Balensifer said Burgener's offers, which were looking for

a base salary far higher than the advertised amount, caught the city off guard.

He also was looking for significant relocation benefits, which the city couldn't meet, Balensifer said.

Balensifer was sympathetic to concerns of housing, but Burgener's lesser experience and room to grow had to be considered by the city in the process, he added.

The city held several staff and community receptions with Burgener, as well as panel interviews by community leaders, public administrators, city department heads and the city commission. The feedback was positive and unanimously supported hiring Burgener, the city said at the time.

Before being city manager in Stanfield, Burgener was the city administrator in Ada, Minnesota, and the finance manager and administrative

services manager for the Utah Department of Transportation.

Burgener was set to replace Linda Engbretson, who announced her retirement last year but agreed to work on an interim basis until her replacement was hired.

"I did just want to comment that I'm disappointed that negotiations didn't work out but I did want to assure this commission, as I think you all know, that you have some quality staff," Engbretson said at the end of April 26 meeting. "Hopefully there are some other options out there as you move forward, but your department heads are hardworking individuals who will hold the weight if it comes down to that."

Engbretson said she wants to officially be out of the role by July, but added the date is flexible if she knows someone is coming in.

# CTUIR hires new deputy executive directors

East Oregonian

MISSION — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation has hired two new executive directors.

Jonetta Herrera started Monday, April 25, and Shana McConville-Radford starts May 2, according to a press release from the tribes.

"I look forward to having both of these CTUIR tribal members join our executive management team and build a solid working relationship with the board of trustees," CTUIR Executive Director Donald Sampson said in the announcement.

Herrera has an educational background in construction and business administration combined with work experience as a former department director for CTUIR, and McConville-Radford has a law degree and has worked in national and regional legislative affairs and served as the Bureau of Indian Affairs superintendent for the Salish Kootenai area.

According to the press release, the tribes in 2019 hired Seattle-based accounting and consulting firm Moss Adams to conduct a full review of the CTUIR organizational structure. The report identified the need for two deputy executive director positions. The board of trustees directed the Office of the Executive Director to develop the positions to report to the executive director.

"The deputies will share the responsibility of supervising 16 departments," according to the release.

"The updated organizational structure will help CTUIR meet the demands of the tribal government."

"I am very honored to be chosen for this position," Herrera said in the press release. "I look forward to making a positive impact for our community working with the CTUIR team."

Herrera holds a bachelor's degree in construction management with a minor in business administration from Central Washington University. She has more than 15 years of experience managing large projects often

involving multimillion-dollar contracts.

"It is an exciting opportunity and important time to meaningfully rebuild, reconnect and refocus our shared organizational values, relationships, identity and purpose to allow our people and our organization to thrive in a post-pandemic environment," McConville-Radford said in the statement. "I am committed to creating and promoting an emotionally safe environment where employees and tribal citizens are comfortable asking questions, offering ideas and

are confident that their leaders are present engaged, and responsive," she said in the release.

Radford holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Portland State University with a master's in international law from the University of New South Wales.

Sampson also thanked Matt Johnson and Teara Farrow-Ferman, who served as interim deputy executive directors for the past year. Sampson said they will assist Herrera and Radford as they transition into their new position.



Got a great business idea for downtown Pendleton?

Join the Path to Success Grant Challenge!

Each winner receives \$20,000 to fund their business.

Apply at [pendletonurbanrenewal.com/pts](http://pendletonurbanrenewal.com/pts)

OR: Print and send/deliver your application to Pendleton City Hall. Application due by 5 p.m. May 24.

To qualify for this challenge:

You must have at least \$5,000 available to you to invest in your new business.

Learn more at: [pendletonurbanrenewal.com/pts](http://pendletonurbanrenewal.com/pts)

LOOK! LOOK! LOOK! PRE-OWNED VEHICLES!



2016 Cadillac XTS \$27,995



2017 Buck LaCrosse \$28,995

Technician Wanted! Call Us Today!

1740 Washington Baker City 1-800-399-391

[www.bakercitygmsales.com](http://www.bakercitygmsales.com)

